

## **IHRC Seeks Unrestricted and Speedy Disbursement of Funds for Haitian Reconstruction**

Former Prime Minister P.J. Patterson reiterated his call for a more concerted and cooperative approach to the planning of reconstruction activities in Haiti, noting that the Haitian government would have to lead the diverse bodies (IHRC, donors, NGOs, UN agencies and others) in avoiding duplication of effort and wastage of time and resources.

Mr Patterson was addressing the sixth meeting of the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission (IHRC), Friday April 15, on which he is the Special Representative of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The IHRC meeting was preceded by a one-day workshop on April 14 which had as its theme, **Accelerating Progress Toward The Achievement of Recovery goals**. The workshop focused on the priority areas of Debris Removal, Agriculture and Food Security, Energy, Health Disaster Management, Water and Sanitation and Housing.

In addressing the meeting on Friday, Mr Patterson urged the IHRC to step up provisions for housing for the thousands of people displaced by the earthquake of January 12, 2010, anticipating an active hurricane season, also provisions for improvements in the availability of water and sanitation, He reaffirmed the urgent need for job creation and a concerted plan to meet Haiti's energy needs.

The former Prime Minister informed the meeting that CARICOM was working on a regional energy plan, of which Haiti would be an important component. He again called for a plan of job creation to be stimulated by the private sector and emphasized the urgent need for the building of institutional capacity. This call was in line with the need to develop several ministries to meet the reconstruction needs, especially the Ministry of Planning which was expected to take the lead in the new process. He urged all involved to ensure that the Diaspora play its role in building the new Haiti, noting the considerable resources that Diaspora groups controlled.

The meeting noted that Japan had fulfilled its obligations to Haiti in full and the catastrophe in that Pacific nation would have no direct negative outcome for Haiti.

It also lauded Brazil for having disbursed some US\$95 M of its US\$300 M pledge directly to the Haitian government for capacity building and other urgent needs.

Co-Chair, Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive expressed similar sentiments to the CARICOM Representative adding that “When Haiti's new president takes office, the HRIC will not only present a comprehensive plan of action, but also the means of implementation of this plan”.

Mr Bellerive noted that there was still work, not directly related to funding deficits, which Haiti had to accomplish before reconstruction could move apace. Strategic decisions had to be made with regards to the identifying of appropriate landfill sites for debris removal and developing a national policy for debris management. The Haitian government, he added, was also focusing on updating the National Plan on risk management and disaster preparedness for approval by Parliament. Also of priority concern was the strengthening of policies relating to decentralizing of the population, the reform of the national water management plan, the development of a formal energy policy and the reform of policies regarding access to land titles and property rights, including the rights of owners and tenants, long a major bone of contention in Haiti.

The outgoing Prime Minister affirmed that the new government was determined to take control of the process, requiring that all projects going before the IHRC first be approved by the Haitian government through the Ministry of Planning. The new system was more practical, especially in light of the fact that the IHRC would be dissolved in October of 2011 and be replaced by The Haiti Development Agency (HDA), a body not yet activated or formalized.

In his address, former US President Bill Clinton also urged the donor groups and nations to more speedily disperse promised financial aid to that earthquake ravaged nation. While thanking the donors for their generosity to date, Clinton offered the opinion that the current rate of 37% disbursement of funds (up from 7% over the previous six weeks) was still not adequate to meet the capacity building needs of the Haitians.

Participants at the meeting reaffirmed their commitment to the reconstruction by the immediate and full payment of pledged funds, and by removing restrictions on

the use of the funds, by offering the funds to the Haitian government for use in identified priority sector programmes.

The members welcomed the era of President Elect Michel Martelly, and noted that he had promised full commitment to the reconstruction process.

In offering congratulations on behalf of CARICOM, Mr Patterson lauded the Haitian authorities, people and their partners for having achieved a clear democratic election despite the aftermath of the January 2010 earthquake, the cholera epidemic and political insecurity. He said that the outcome was a testament to what can be achieved through partnership and represented “a welcome victory for democracy which must not fail to be rewarded by a premium to enhance the success of reconstruction efforts during this phase of democratic transition...”

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Contact: Clare Forrester, OSPR Haiti, (876)970-4250; 920-5701; 289-1028;  
antoye@gmail.com